3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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on a given night after everybody was asleep lest the matter became known and the prospective electee take flight. When a rumor would spread that a new election was imminent, those who thought they might be elected used commonly to go away and sleep elsewhere than in their own lodges, as almost all were reluctant to become keepers. Those invited to the election meeting had to keep absolute secrecy beforehand, and at the meeting itself no one else than the keeper and co-keeper and the above invitees was present except two attendants, sons of keepers or ex-keepers.

The actual keeper might open the discussion by proposing a name. Discussion was free but dignified. Agreement would be finally reached, perhaps well after midnight or towards morning, on the keeper's first choice or on some other man. Knowing how onerous the keepership was, the keeper out of the regard for the ex-keepers would not be apt to nominate one of their sons, and ordinarily did not nominate one of his own.

The proposed keeper had to be a prominent member of the tribe, a man of great ability and renown, with a record of recognized achievement and with very considerable wealth in horses, in the size and furnishings of his lodge, and so forth. He had to be of the cream of the tribe, or "the best among many." And he had "to be good" as the Gros Ventre ethical code conceived goodness. He had to be generous; a stingy man, even though a great warrior, and even though he had vowed to become keeper, would never get the Pipe, for the keeper had to feed people and to be good to them and have pity on them. A murderer of a fellow tribesman could not become keeper, nor could a "professional" gambler, that is, one who is known to have supernatural gambling power. In general one guilty of grave crime such as rape or theft from fellow tribesman, or of habitual marked moral delinquency or defect, such as lying, backbiting, felony, disbelief in or disrespect for holy things, was barred from the keepership as he was barred from rising high in the prestige scale.

After the choice was finally decided upon, the whole party with others of their kin proceeded secretively before or toward daybreak to the lodge of the electee to seize him bodily by surprise before he could escape. Once seized or even only elected he had practically

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ceticism" expected of the keeper, his status as one set apart from his fellows, and his political and civil role in the Gros Ventre theocracy. We shall classify and treat them in this order, although some of them do not fit too neatly into any one of the five or six categories, and some straddle two or more of them. Incidentally, in many cases these refer to the co-keeper as well, although our field notes mention only the keeper.

The keeper and co-keeper of the Flat Pipe held a very sacred office of great eminence, and their persons and everything on or about them were considered holy. They themselves were expected always to behave in a dignified manner becoming their exalted and sacred position, and others were obliged to show them due respect.

The keeper and co-keeper were not permitted "to do foolish things like other people." They could not, for instance, take part in gossip or other petty meanness. They were obligated as well to many ethical, "ascetic" and ritual observances to be described presently.

Marked respect was due them from their fellow-tribesmen. As The Boy put it, the Gros Ventres, now all Catholics, "had just the same great respect for the keeper and his wife as they now have for the priests and nuns."

People had to keep their distance from the keeper and co-keeper, and could not sit close to them, or touch, grab or wrestle with them. Apparently, however, they could shake hands with them. If the keeper asked anyone to hand him something, the object had to be passed by hand, not thrown to him; if it were thrown toward the keeper on the ground and he had to pick it up, some accident would befall either the keeper or the thrower.

If anyone stepped over the outstretched feet or legs of the sitting keeper or co-keeper, the guilty party would at once fall in a fit, or get cramps and could be cured only by the offended keeper or co-keeper. Likewise, if the keeper, intentionally or unintentionally, stepped over the outstretched legs of a sitting person, the person would get fits or cramps and could be cured only by the keeper.

If the keeper or an ex-keeper had the Flat Pipe or even a com-

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happen. If told in a dream, perhaps by the owl, of an impending epidemic, he might call all the people to his lodge and ritually paint them. If he dreamed of bad luck about to befall some individual in camp, he would tell him: "I dreamed that something was going to happen to you. You better make an offering. I will pray for you and try to avert the misfortune, but you must help."

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In general the keeper and co-keeper of the Feathered Pipe were expected to live strictly in conformity with Gros Ventre ethical norms. Specifically recorded by us as unbecoming and forbidden to the keeper were: stealing, fighting, quarreling, losing temper, wife-beating, talking evil of fellow-tribesman, "talking dirty," threatening to kill, and, for more recent times, cursing and swearing like the whites.

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The Feathered Pipe keepership seems to have involved for the keeper and co-keeper about the same privations and restrictions as did the Flat Pipe, although we obtained explicit information only regarding the following ones.

"The keeper of the Feathered Pipe was not supposed to comb his hair. It was all matted and made him look different from other men. You see him and you know at once he is a Pipe man. Sitting High's hair was that way. The locks were stuck together in the back. It made him look like a holy man. He never cut his hair and was not supposed to put water on it. His wife [the co-keeper] could comb her hair, but I do not think she could put water on it."[8]

The keeper could not bathe or swim in a stream; if he did, there would be rain. He could not wash his face but wiped it off with a cloth. He could not cut himself as a sacrifice or as a sign of mourning. He could not cry at mourning, not in the presence of the Pipe. Gambling by or with the keeper was forbidden, under the same penalty of life and with the same rite of absolution as described for the Flat Pipe keeper.

According to Al Chandler, the Feathered Pipe keeper and co-keeper, in contrast to the Flat Pipe keeper and co-keeper and

[8] In 1948 Al Chandler added: "The keeper cannot eat eggs, chicken, the head of any animal, nor dogs. In fact nothing about dogs was allowed near the keeper. Wherever they were, no one could walk in front of the keeper or co-keeper." [R.F.]